



RNZPBA
EDUCATION
GROUP

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

GREG WILSON
PRINCIPAL - PIPING
COLLEGE OF PIPING AND DRUMMING
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Presented by Greg Wilson - Principal of the College of Piping

Planning for Success

Introduction

We are now at the stage where we have covered a lot of essential elements of running a band. This has largely been in terms of technical aspects. We now have to put all these technical aspect into a planning context so that we can effectively put to good use the knowledge and skills we have acquired. If we fail to plan, then we plan to fail. Let me say that again.....

If we fail to plan, then we plan to fail

Planning is a vital aspect of running a band and one that many band leaders do not put enough effort into. Bands should be run more as businesses than as an ad hoc part time organisation. If they are run as businesses using well founded and successful business models, it is difficult to see how such a band could fail to achieve any reasonable goals it sets – it will probably even exceed them! What follows is merely my take on planning – there will be many of you out there that have as much or more experience than me in this area – apply this knowledge and skill to the planning process in your band.

Let's get started then.....

VISION STATEMENT

Before embarking on writing a plan for the band or to developing a mission statement, there must be a clear and universal understanding of the reason the band exists and where it is going. This should come from the senior members of the band and organisation it may belong to (Caledonian Society). These members form the Band Executive – nothing particularly new here.

It is the first task of the Executive to come up with a 3-4 sentence vision statement that is then communicated to the rest of the band. It specifies what the band is all about and sets the direction for further analysis of goals/objectives/tasks that need to be achieved in order to satisfy the Vision Statement. It could look something like:

XYZ Pipe Band will be a fine example of a pipe band within our grade. We will present a very positive image of pipe banding to the general public that will promote the pipe band movement in New Zealand and attract new members. We will have a robust tuition programme to cater for new members and to develop existing members. The tuition programme will be key to the long-term survival of the band.

Based on this vision statement, we can already see that there will be an emphasis on:

- ◆ Performance standard
- ◆ The general look of the band
- ◆ Tuition programme

The vision statement needs universal acceptance from the band membership – they must all buy into it as everything that follows will be based on the vision for the band.

Pipe Major and Leading Drummer Intent Statements

Following the agreement and successful selling of the vision, it is timely for the pipe major and leading drummer to formulate a statement of intent for each of their corps and potentially one for the band as a whole. This will be based on and be subordinate to the vision statement. The intent statement should be 2-3 sentences which outlines the basic philosophy of the band leadership. It may look something like:

My intent is to improve our musical performance standard through improved technical competence of individuals, and to develop a recruitment and retention programme that will ensure the longevity of the pipe corps. I will also establish and maintain a close liaison relationship with the leading drummer in order to develop the bands ensemble.

My intent is to improve the standard of the scores we are able to play, to develop tighter integration within the corps, and to develop a recruitment and retention programme that will ensure the longevity of the drum corps. I will also establish and maintain a close liaison relationship with the pipe major in order to develop the bands ensemble.

Based on these intent statements, we can clearly see the leadership will be focusing on:

- ◆ Individual technical and musical competence
- ◆ Tuition programme (learners and existing members)
- ◆ Recruitment and retention
- ◆ Ensemble
- ◆ Longevity of the band

Note here that these statements are in no way prescriptive, and may not suit all bands. There will be other aspects peculiar to individual bands that will be relevant to include in the vision and intent statements. The important aspect here is that we are developing a systematic approach to the management and execution of the bands activities.

Goal Setting

Based on the vision and intent statements, we can now get down to the business of specifying goals that need to be achieved in order for the vision for the band to be realised. Some of these goals can be taken directly from vision and intent statements and some goals will come from a logical thought process of “.....in order to satisfy x in the intent or vision statements, I will also need to do a, b, and c.....”

Goals:

- ◆ Improve the sound and musical competence of each section of the band
- ◆ Improve the ensemble effect being achieved by the band
- ◆ Improve the visual appearance of the band
- ◆ Develop a tuition programme for existing membership and new members
- ◆ Develop a management structure that can manage and monitor the achievement of objectives
- ◆ Develop a financial plan that will support the bands objectives

Mission Statement

At this point, we should take a long hard look at the goals set and decide which one or two of them are the most essential goals. These will form the bulk of your bands Mission Statement. For me, I would identify Goal 1 and Goal 4 above as my essential goals. The other goals are also important, but are perhaps subordinate to the achievement of the essential goals identified. They will still need careful consideration and planning to ensure they are achieved. Based on this, I can now develop my first crack at the bands Mission Statement. It should consist broadly of the following parts: What, Where, When and Why. What are we going to do, where and when do we have to do it, and why are we doing it. Once the band membership understand all parts of the Mission statement, they will have a very good understanding of the bands direction and what will be expected of them.

In this case, the bands mission statement could read something like:

XYZ pipe band is to improve the sound and musical competence of each section of the band and develop a tuition programme for existing membership and new members, in order to present a first rate example of a pipe band of our grade to the pipe band movement and the wider public audience.

Constraints/Freedoms

The next step is to look at any constraints and freedoms that we have that are relevant to the achievement of our goals. Many of these will be common to all bands, but there will be some that are peculiar to individual bands only, depending on their structure, financial position etc. This section is really a mind-clearing exercise and reality check that will inform the achievement of the goals identified. For example, if one of our goals is to “re-equip the band with new uniforms, drums and pipe chanters” we will need significant funds to achieve it. One of the constraints that we may have identified is funding (the level/amount of which is also identified). Depending on the financial position, we may be in a poor position to achieve this goal. Therefore, if the goal is to be achieved, a significant effort needs to be put into fund raising activities.

Constraint Examples:

Time:
 members can only devote their time to one practice per week
 members can generally attend practices for 2 – 2 ½ hours
 there is only *x* number of weeks/rehearsals until our next performance/competition etc

Resources:
 We only have *x* number of chanters/drums
 We only have *x* amount of funding to spend on reeds/drum heads/chanters etc
 We only have *x* number of kilts etc
 We do not have a good band rehearsal facility

Freedom Examples:

Rehearsal/Practice frequency and duration
 Content of each rehearsal
 Varied sources of funding
 When, Where, and How we do things
 What reeds, chanters, drums to use

These constraints and freedoms are perhaps best summarised in a table like that below, so that when either a constraint of freedom is identified, we are also identifying what effect it will have on the achievement of the bands goals and what we can do about it.

Freedom/Constraint	Deduction/Action
Members can only attend rehearsal once each week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Need to maximise rehearsal time with a well thought out rehearsal schedule with detailed thought has to what is covered during each rehearsal ● Need to institute a system of developing players outside of band rehearsal time ● Need to maximise players enjoyment of rehearsals to motivate them to practice more in their own time ●
Can include whatever we like within each weekly rehearsal period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● need to have a co-ordinated plan for each rehearsal that maximises the progress of the group towards its objectives ● the co-ordinated plan needs to culminate with the contesting season where the band is performing at its peak ●
Etc, etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●

Critical Information Requirements

Under this heading, we need to think about the unknowns and list them. If they are clearly identified and written down, there is much more chance that they will be addressed. Such information requirements may be:

1. What finances are available?
2. How many players will be available?
3. What is the ability of each player?
4. When are the contests during the year?
5. What rehearsal facilities do we require?
6. What are the bands parade commitments?
7. What is the state of the instrument set-up?
8. etc, etc

The answers to these questions will help in forming the plan of action under the relevant sections in the overall plan for the band.

Setting Objectives for Each Goal

The next step is the setting of objectives for each goal identified and to establish what the key performance indicators (KPI) will be to help us measure our progress towards those objectives, and therefore goals. Again, a tabular format like that below is a good way of recording and collating our thoughts:

Goal	Objective	KPI
Improve the sound and musical competence of each section of the band	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop the sound of each individuals instrument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> each individual able to tune their own instrument to a high level minimal time spent during band rehearsal on instrument setup/ maintenance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop technical competence of each individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> each member receiving regular individual tuition individuals sitting and gaining high passes in the RNZPBA College of Piping and Drumming certification programme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to perform to the bands potential at Provincial and National contests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a contest day routine established full attendances at band rehearsals during the year rehearse the contest day routine
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maintain the membership of the band 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 Pipers 4 side drummers 2 tenor drummers 1 bass drummer Established and working tuition programme 10 learner pipers 10 learner drummers
Improve the ensemble effect being achieved by the band	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve very good integration within each section of the band 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members receiving regular individual tuition Members focussed on playing together and communicating with players either side of them Members learning the tunes accurately and within timeframes set
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drum scores sympathetic to the melody 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuous communication between pipe major and leading drummer Outside feedback on the effect of the drum scores sought and received

.....and so on. A good deal of attention paid to this section will pay dividends time and time again during the year as all the bases will have been covered and nothing will have been left to chance.

Restate the Bands Mission

After having gone through the steps above, it may be necessary to amend the mission that we came up with earlier. Given the detail we have gone to in the setting of objectives and identifying key performance indicators, we may have found ourselves doing things that do not reflect our initial mission statement. If we have thought about our bands goals carefully, it is unlikely that the content or intent of the mission will have changed. But if we feel the need to modify the mission, now is the time.

The Plan

We can now use the information established above and formulate a plan to achieve everything. I will not cover the detail of the plan in this tutorial, however it will be useful to identify the main areas that we need to plan for. There are a number of ways to think about this, however the main headings of the plan could be:

Main Area	Broken down into....	Further broken down...
Sound	Pipes	Volume
		Tone
		Pitch
		Steadiness
		Ensemble effect with drum corps
		..etc..
	Drums	Volume
		Tone
		Pitch
		Mid section
Music	MSR	Technical Difficulty
		Melodic Line
		Breaks
		Percussion effect
	Medley	Melodic Line
		Effective introductory tune
		Breaks
		Harmony
	Street March	etc
	Display	
Membership	Retention of Members	
	Recruitment	
	Development of new and existing players	
Finances	Running Costs	Reeds
		Top/bottom heads
		Bags
		Sticks, etc
	Contest Costs	Travel
		Accommodation
	Capital Costs	New Chanters
New Drums		
New Band Rooms (!)		
Etc		

... and so on. As long as you can see where I am heading with this. Each functional aspect of running the band must be addressed and planned for. No plan will be the same between bands, although there will be a large degree of similarity given that we are essentially try to achieve the same thing – better, more consistent performances.

Summary

Knowledge is a fundamental element in achieving a better performance level. How to use this knowledge, and to make sure we make the best use of this knowledge is even more fundamental. We need a plan. The plan is not set in concrete – it can be amended as the year goes by to reflect any changing circumstances. We must be faithful to the vision and the plan is subordinate to this.

Almost any plan is better than no plan at all. Remember that if we fail to plan, then we plan to fail. All senior members of the band or the Band Executive membership need to be involved in the formulation and execution of the plan. What I have outlined in this tutorial is my tuppence worth. There are many business planning models that can be successfully adapted to the running of a pipe band. If we are continuously thinking and planning ahead, we cannot help but succeed in the overall vision for our band. We may loose a few battles along the way for various reasons. This is fine as long as we win the war (achieve the vision) in the final analysis.

Notes:

